

STATE

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May 2013

MAGAZINE

Wild Art

Rhino Sculpture Highlights
Conservation Efforts

Family Matters

Department Employees
Balance Careers with Family

Himalayan Portal

Kathmandu Posting Offers More
than Breathtaking Scenery



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Focus Cuts Backlog
in Brasília

Designed by the late Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer, the futuristic National Museum stands as a testament to his architectural vision in Brasília's Cultural Complex of the Republic.
Photo by Sylvain Bourdos





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On the Cover

The hills and mountains of Nepal are a nearly endless source of leisure activities and inspiration. *Photo by John Healey/jhph.asia*

A Time for Healing

On April 6, Anne Smedinghoff, an information officer serving in Afghanistan, was among six Americans killed when a suicide bomber detonated an explosive device near the group as they traveled by foot to deliver Dari- and Pashto-language children's books to a school in Zabul province. Smedinghoff becomes the first State Department casualty directly related to Operation Enduring Freedom, the official title for the war in Afghanistan that has claimed the lives of more than 2,200 Americans since 2001.

Following the news of Smedinghoff's death, Secretary of State John Kerry spoke about the promising young diplomat, who had only two weeks earlier served as a control officer during his visit to post.

"She was everything a Foreign Service officer should be: smart, capable, eager to serve and deeply committed to our country and the difference she was making for the Afghan people," he said. "She tragically gave her young life working to give young Afghans the opportunity to have a better future."

In fanatical, irrational acts of violence like this one, the innocent are frequently the targets. The victims of this recent attack were trying to improve the lives of those who have been oppressed by tyranny, terror and corruption. They were not sitting behind a desk talking about how to make the world a better place; they were out making it happen.

Smedinghoff and her colleagues were in Zabul as part of an embassy-funded program that, with the Afghan Ministry of Education, promoted literacy and provided teacher training. To combat one of the lowest literacy rates in the world, the U.S. Embassy has distributed 1,920,000 books to 27 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces and provided training for the books' use.



In addition to those civilians and service members killed in this attack, several others were injured, some critically. Among those who sustained serious wounds was Kelly Hunt, a friend of mine from the small, tight-knit community of prior-service military journalists to which we both belong. A former Army photographer, Hunt was working for the Department as a public diplomacy officer in Afghanistan when she was struck by shrapnel from the blast.

There is little that can blunt the breath-robbling blow that news of this magnitude delivers, but I remain optimistic that Hunt's passion for life, which drove her to reach out and try to make a positive difference in the lives of others, will also fuel her recovery. She has a long, arduous journey ahead, and at the time of publication remains in critical but stable condition. Her relatives and the families of the other victims of this attack remain in our thoughts.

Email your condolences and well wishes to us at statemagazine@state.gov and we'll publish some of them in an upcoming issue. ■



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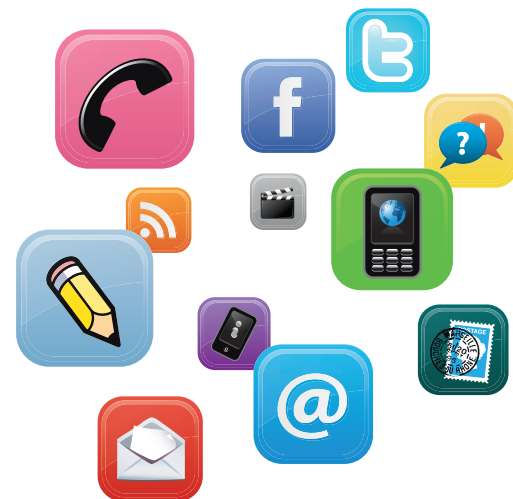
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Rome Marines

We wanted to thank *State Magazine* for publishing the Tri-Mission Rome article in the May edition that highlighted the USO's "Meet the Parents Program." This annual USO initiative recognizes the outstanding work of two Marines from the Tri-Mission Rome detachment and covers the costs of reuniting them with their parents for a week's vacation.

After the article was published, American Airlines was inspired to donate the flights for this year's program winners, Sgt. Jomiah G. Price from Seattle, Wash., and Sgt. Jerome Jacob from the Federated States of Micronesia. We thank American Airlines and USO Rome for their continued support of the U.S. Marine Detachment Rome.

Michael P. Vanni
Management Intern
U.S. Embassy in Rome



Frankfurt Memories

It was fun reading your feature on Frankfurt (March 2012, pg. 20), my second Foreign Service post, in 1950. My wife and I were the first residents in the Carl Schurz Siedlung, living on Jakob Leisler Strasse 9. Both of our children were born in

the 97th Army General Hospital which is now the American Consulate General. Most of the city was still in ruins, yet there was the beginning of a rich cultural life. I was the director of the Amerika Haus, the U.S. cultural and information center, which at that time was the actual community center in the city. Our Consul General was Chetwin Montague de Rinzy Piggott.

Thank you for leading me along memory lane.

Hans N. Tuch
Foreign Service officer (Ret.)



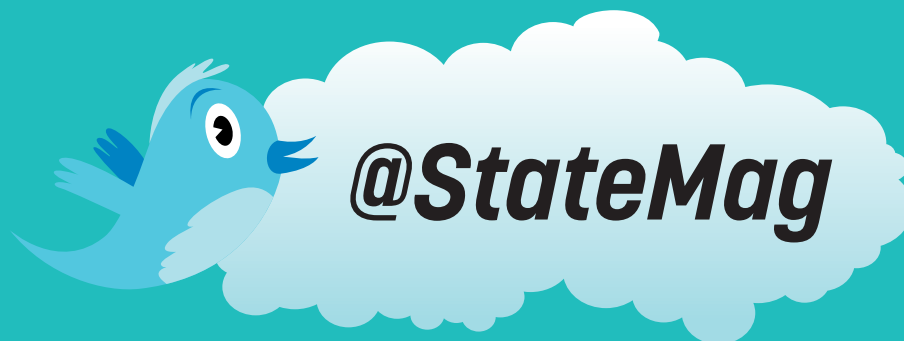
Birthday Wishes

Congratulations to *State Magazine* on its 65th birthday (February issue).

I had the good fortune to edit *State Magazine* from 1996 to 2004 when it evolved from paste pot to desktop, from black-and-white to color and from print to digital. The transition wasn't easy. It required the support of advisory board members, supervisors, editorial staff and readers.

May you continue to prosper and be, as one senior diplomat once described the magazine, that "warm welcome from home."

Carl Goodman
Signal Mountain, Tenn.



Mention @StateMag in your official post or office tweets and get your story out to the world! We'll retweet the most interesting news and feature items to our online followers and include the best Twitter postings in upcoming issues of *State Magazine*!

In the News

Comics Connect with Indonesian Youth

At a comic convention (or comic-con) for comics aficionados in Jakarta, the U.S. Embassy's @america outreach effort celebrated its second birthday with Ambassador Scot Marciel, EAP Deputy Assistant Secretary Susan Stevenson, IIP Acting Deputy Coordinator Courtney Austrian and more than 300 guests in attendance.

The January 18 birthday celebration for @america, which has hosted more than 1,300 events for more than 260,000 visitors, reflected the comic-con theme in its title, @ameri-Con 2013, and in game and toy displays. Attendees included comic writers and illustrators, plus English language experts and teachers. A back-flipping break-dancer in a homemade Transformers costume won the costume play (or cosplay) competition.

The convention had 12 separate events and hosted more than 1,200 participants over three days. Speakers included indie graphic novelists Josh Neufeld and Jason Shiga; Indonesian comic book illustrator Ardian Syaf, who draws for DC Comics and Marvel Comics; and Dr. Naif Al-Mutawa, creator of a superhero book and animated TV series based on Islamic faith and culture.

In Indonesia, faith and fantasy are not contradictory impulses. A young observant Muslim woman who belongs to a "Star Wars" club engaged in a mock fight against imagined enemies using a light saber.

American comic books and their fan-based subcultures offer persuasive narratives. Adji Widodo, who leads the Indonesia-U.S. Comic

Book Readers club, said Indonesians love comic books "because everyone needs a hero. Many American comic books emphasize heroic stories... America introduces their values to other countries in a light and easy-to-understand way."

"Commander" Hilmy Hasanuddin of the Indo Star Trek group said he believes "science fiction people contribute to the idea of the future."

Comic-con culture has become big business, and @america supported the multibillion-dollar American movie and comic book industries by promoting their brands and icons. Promoting comic-con culture's music, theme parks, clothes and toys supports the American economy in a fun, appealing way.

The @america comic-con also reinforced the image of the United States as open and eager to share in what is now a world pastime.

"We love our superheroes," Ambassador Marciel told the nation's top newspaper. "They help us to dream, but also to fight for our values, the values of kindness."

Left: High school students at the convention display their copies of *The 99* comic book. **Right:** Comedian Fathia Saripuspita asks an audience at the event why there are so few female superheroes.

Photos courtesy of @america



DG Leads Recruitment Roadshow to Texas

The Director General of the Foreign Service and Director of Human Resources (DG), Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield, led a team from the Bureau of Human Resources' Office of Recruitment, Examination, and Employment (HR/REE) and the Bureau of International Organizations (IO) on a recruitment trip to Austin, San Antonio and Dallas, Feb. 26-March 1.

The DG scheduled the visit to coincide with the first off-site assessment of the Foreign Service Oral Assessment by the Board of Examiners (BEX) to be done in six years at a Texas venue. Coinciding with the assessments, the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) held its 10th Annual International Conference

Feb. 28-March 1 in San Antonio, and HR/REE organized a diversity career networking event (DCNE) for regional candidates. The DG visited the San Antonio assessment center, where she met the day's seven successful candidates, and participated in the HACU Conference and DCNE, with 240 attendees, where she engaged with motivated State Department aspirants.

The DG and her team held a workshop in Austin for 37 career advisors from 12 Texas universities to update the advisors on State careers, internships and fellowships. Later, she told a University of Texas (UT) gathering on "Diplomacy in the 21st Century" how modern technology and social media are changing diplomats' work.

In San Antonio, the DG spoke to a standing-room-only audience at St. Mary's University, whose student population is 71 percent Hispanic. At least 17 serving FSOs and six Civil Service employees in the Department are alumni of St. Mary's. The roadshow ended with a visit to the Dallas Passport and Diplomatic Security (DS) offices. At the latter, the DG presented a plaque for 30 years of service to Vanessa E. Winins.

Accompanying the DG on the trip were Kaara Ettesvold, Derwood Staeben, Kathleen Eagen, Jessica Norris and Anjoly Ibrahim of HR/REE, and Courtney Johnson of IO, who recruits American citizens for positions with international organizations. The team was joined in Texas by San Antonio-based Bryan Hykes of DS, UT Pickering Fellow Shirley Green and Diplomat in Residence Julie Connor.

Dr. Antonio Flores, president of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, discusses Hispanic recruitment with the DG in San Antonio. Photo by Studio Fuzed



IRM Releases Online Collaboration Tool

A new resource called The Current, from the Knowledge Leadership Division of the Office of eDiplomacy in the Bureau of Information Resource Management, enables domestic and overseas OpenNet users, including USAID staff and interagency Foreign Affairs Network users, to display information from sources inside and outside the Department of State in a single website.

The Current is being used to track breaking developments such as a refugee crisis or a natural disaster, and to follow long-running matters, from leadership studies to think tank reports. Within days of its launch, The Current had more than 7,000 users from the Department and 220 posts. A sort of online briefing book, The Current is available in a standard version that provides "global" pages with information such as ALDACs and Department news on external social media. There's also a customizable version that lets users of Corridor, the Department's in-house networking service, create 10 additional "personal" pages, drawing on as many as 90 additional sources of their choosing. The Current's collaboration feature enables users to share pages and news items with colleagues via email, Corridor or relevant Communities@State.

Deputy Chief Information Officer Janice Fedak said that "if an item interests you, it should interest your colleagues—so share it, talk about it, expand everyone's perspectives about developments that matter.

"Whether you're new to a job or a seasoned employee, there's often too much information to digest and it's scattered in so many different places. The Current can help you get a handle on that and then discuss with your colleagues what that information means to our foreign policy and our diplomatic statecraft," she said.

"The Current is a clean and intuitive way of visualizing otherwise disparate news sources," said Gregory Maly of the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations.

Stephanie Bowers of the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor said The Current can put "thematic issues tailored to my office's interests on one page. It's a significant timesaver and doesn't clog up my already full inbox."



News

Mission Promotes Health, Education in Nigeria

Through the opening of a rural clinic and a partnership with a newspaper, the U.S. Mission in Nigeria earlier this year promoted health and education in its host nation.

The education effort had the public affairs section of the U.S. Consulate General in Lagos partnering with the publication *This Day*



Above: Dehab Ghebream, public affairs officer at the U.S. Consulate General in Lagos, left, listens as *This Day's* Editor-in-Chief, Nduka Obaigbena, talks to students. *Photo by Consulate General Lagos;* **Below:** Women in a village south of Jos, Nigeria, dance in a welcome ceremony for U.S. Consulate General staff. *Photo by Brian Williams*

to host a youth education outreach program for students, who learned about Internet educational resources and U.S. Mission educational services such as EducationUSA. Former President Bill Clinton gave a speech and 15 teachers received awards at the February event, which recognized prominent Nigerian educators and was attended by more than 1,500 people, including notable public figures, government officials, traditional leaders and 300 students.

"Economic power will go to those who maximize the opportunity of education," said Clinton, who shared stories about teachers who influenced his life.

A month earlier, staff from the U.S. Embassy in Abuja traveled to Tokbet for the opening of the Tokbet Community Clinic, which will serve up to 15,000 inhabitants in this remote area, providing maternity care, prenatal checkups, HIV/AIDS testing, counseling and treatment.

Construction of the clinic involved a partnership of the Tokbet Community Development Association and the U.S. Mission's Small Grants Program.

At the opening, Deputy Chief of Mission James P. McAnulty described how the Small Grants Program can be used to support broader U.S. foreign policy aims, such as implementation of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. For more than two decades, Mission Nigeria, through the Ambassador's Small Grants and Special Self-Help programs, has partnered with NGOs throughout Nigeria to fund small community-based development projects that promote sustainable development and improve living conditions. Projects have included construction of classrooms, health clinics and community centers, and provision of food processing mills, boreholes, latrines, textbooks, classroom furniture and laboratory equipment.



Indonesian University Interns Help Consulate

With limited staff and growing personnel needs, the newly constructed U.S. Consulate General in Surabaya, Indonesia, partnered with local universities in 2012 to create a series of internship programs that rotate Indonesian university students through several consulate sections.

After pitching the idea to a local university's president, the chair of its Business Information Systems Department and information technology students, the post hired two interns for a six-month rotational program. The students troubleshoot systems issues, installed new hardware and software, updated the SharePoint site and edited consulate photographs and videos. They also provided technical know-how and subject-matter expertise to the public affairs section (PAS) for social media initiatives.

According to Public Affairs Officer Andrew Veveiros, "Using Indonesian college students to run our Facebook site gives unique insight, as the interns represent our target group—young Indonesian students and future leaders. Without interns, PAS would not be able to be as effective as we would like."

The students benefit, too: They get to work in an American environment, hone their English language skills and become more competitive in the global market. So far, five interns have rotated through the information resource management, public affairs and political-economic sections.

In the political-economic section (P-E), which has seen a significant increase in travel, representational events and reporting, the three Locally Employed Staff have portfolios that cover a broad range of topics and an immense geographical area. Therefore, "We were desperate for any help we could get, and our first intern has proved this program is extremely valuable," said P-E Officer Michelle Morales. The intern,



Local college intern Hanan J. Basyarahil shows Information Program Officer Maurizio Visani a promotional video she created for the consulate.

Photo by Didik B. Wicaksono

who is studying international affairs, helped compile data for the 2012 Trafficking in Persons Report and helped organize a major representational event promoting religious tolerance and honoring Martin Luther King Jr. and former Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid.

The internship program maximizes resources in a tight budget climate and addresses Mission Indonesia's long-term strategy of creating educational partnerships between the United States and Indonesia, since people-to-people ties made through education promote a solid bilateral relationship.

Visa Seeker Gives Birth at Embassy London

Waiting in the visa line at the U.S. Embassy in London, a pregnant woman who'd traveled 100 miles by train to get there began having contractions. Local guards Tara Porter and Jamie Stockwell alerted the medical unit, which called an ambulance, and Assistant Regional Security Officer Eric Ros helped escort the woman and her son through security to the medical unit.

The paramedics arrived after 45 minutes, but seeing that the patient was in good hands and too far along to be transported, they allowed Dr. Larry Padget, Marlene Kleven and Linda Van Leuven to deliver a healthy baby girl. The new baby and her mother were transported by ambulance to a London hospital and were discharged the following day.

Although the post's medical unit is unequipped for childbirth, its staff gave the laboring woman oxygen, found extra heating, lighting and medical supplies and even fashioned a makeshift bassinet from the baby scale. The housekeeping staff delivered extra linens and the administrative assistant entertained the woman's son in the waiting room.

"While the nurses were doing the real work of cleaning up, I was drinking tea and receiving 'attaboys' and 'well done' from my friends and colleagues around the world," said Dr. Padget, the regional medical officer in London.

The mother returned to the embassy later to renew her son's passport, the task that had first brought her there. She brought her new baby along for all to see. ■

Direct from the D.G.

LINDA THOMAS-GREENFIELD
DIRECTOR GENERAL

Preventing and Resolving Workplace Problems

Are you facing, or being accused of, bullying, threats or intimidation? Do you feel like you are in a hostile work environment? Are your work assignments and/or schedules unreasonable? Are you a supervisor or manager with employees who must work together but don't get along? Is a difficult co-worker holding your office hostage? Are you in a conflict and just not sure how to handle it?

Each and every employee of the State Department is far too important to be stressed by unresolved issues in the workplace; therefore, if you are experiencing any such non-EEO-based conflicts, I strongly encourage you to reach out to the Office of the Ombudsman, in Room 7330 of the Harry S Truman Building. The Office of the Ombudsman is open to all Department employees—whether they are Civil Service, Foreign Service, Locally Employed Staff or contractors.

Led by Shireen Dodson, the Office of the Ombudsman offers traditional ombuds services such as conflict coaching and facilitated conversations, and has recently opened its Workplace Conflict Prevention and Resolution Center, which offers mediation, group facilitation, fact finding and peer review panels. The center is committed to fostering a workplace culture that proactively manages conflict and benefits from innovative and creative resolutions. Its mission is to provide a voluntary, neutral, independent and

confidential program whereby employees can consensually resolve workplace disputes and reach fair and quick solutions to workplace conflicts.

Office of the Ombudsman personnel are selected for their positions based on their experience in mediation, conflict resolution and coaching, as well as their interpersonal skills. They must be welcoming, so that employees feel comfortable talking with them, and must know how to really listen to people and be empathetic. They can help employees and managers understand how they are contributing to conflicts, as well as give co-workers skills to help them to cope with difficult colleagues.

The center's goals are:

- 1) Provide an environment where employees and managers can present issues in a nonthreatening forum,
- 2) Forge better relations among disputing parties,
- 3) Provide an impartial third party to assist in identifying the causes of work-related concerns/issues and
- 4) Help parties in conflict obtain mutually acceptable resolutions.

First-time visitors to the Office of the Ombudsman can expect to participate in a "convening" conversation to clarify issues, identify stakeholders and discuss options for resolution. From that meeting, a plan of action and next steps will be agreed upon. The office staff tailor their response to the needs of the individuals who contact the office.

If the conflict involves an individu-



al, then Ombuds Services can facilitate conversations and provide coaching and conflict resolution services. If the conflict involves more than one person, then the group may be directed to the Workplace Conflict Prevention and Resolution Center, which can provide fact-finding, peer review panels, group facilitation and mediation. If Ombuds Services believes it is appropriate, it may refer that individual to the Office of the Inspector General or another suitable office.

As federal workers, we are guardians of the public trust and there are certain standards that we are all expected to live by. We call upon all of you—supervisors and employees alike—to show integrity, to adhere to the highest standards of ethical conduct and, when problems arise, to resolve them at the core.

For more information, please contact the Office of the Ombudsman via email at Ombudsman@state.gov, or via phone at (202) 736-7144. ■

Linda Thomas-Greenfield

Diversity Notes

JOHN M. ROBINSON
OFFICE OF CIVIL RIGHTS

Why Does Diversity Matter to Me?

This question was most eloquently answered by Department of State leaders commemorating the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday on Feb. 5. For three successful years, the Office of Civil Rights has emphasized Dr. King's message of inclusion by hosting an event featuring the Department's senior leaders discussing why diversity and inclusion are important to them.

Past speakers have included Under Secretary Maria Otero, Legal Adviser Harold Koh, Assistant Secretary Esther Brimmer, Under Secretary Patrick Kennedy, Executive Secretary Daniel Smith and Director General Nancy Powell. Contributors such as Ambassador Barry Wells, Senior Policy Adviser Judith Heumann, Ambassador David Huebner, Deputy Assistant Secretary Marcia Bernicat, Deputy Assistant Secretary Daniel Baer and Ambassador Luis CdeBaca have also taken the time to share their stories with us in the past.

Each individual's answer and accompanying stories were unique. Under Secretary Otero shared the story of her family, which was trying to maintain its ancestral roots, while also trying to assimilate into U.S. culture. Audiences learned that the young Harold Koh switched his favorite baseball player from Babe Ruth to Jackie Robinson after a classmate convinced him Jackie did everything Babe did, but did it while others wanted him to

fail. Nancy Powell's "aha" moment, the moment she realized that being different is significant, occurred when she learned she could not coach high school football because there were no facilities in the locker room for women. We further learned that Judith Heumann and her family had to fight against the public education system so that she could attend school. Ambassador CdeBaca shared his father's story of driving from northern New Mexico to New Mexico State University, having to travel through dangerous territory where he consistently feared violence in order to attend school.

I frequently write and speak about the crucial role of leaders in making their commitment to diversity visible, specific, personal, and persistent. Part of that role includes leadership sharing their diversity stories with staff to show that the commitment is personal and genuine. Expressing a commitment to diversity in personal terms is an important way of communicating the strength of that commitment to staff.

People are the sum of their experiences, and each workplace benefits from the diverse and varied experiences of all of its employees. I therefore challenge each office to set aside time for willing staff members to share a diversity story or "aha" moment with the rest of the team. The goal is not to create a "kumbaya" moment for all involved, but rather to reveal the diverse skills and life experiences of the



individuals within the team. Consider using this exercise during the next office off-site meeting. People want to work with team members they know and with whom they feel a connection. You may find some untapped skills or talents within your team that you never knew existed. At the very least, you will bring people together, and team members will understand one another better. The results may surprise you.

I applaud those leaders who have already shared their personal stories and invite others to do so during future events. Their stories not only demonstrate their deep commitment to diversity and inclusion at the Department, but they also define pivotal moments in their professional development. I also applaud those who listen and take the message to heart. The amount of positive feedback the Office of Civil Rights has received following each of these events has been overwhelming. All of the programs are archived on BNET and are available for viewing at any time. ■

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John M. Robinson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end.



Promoting Resilience

Department Programs Help FS Staff Bounce Back

By Ray Leki, director, Transition Center, Foreign Service Institute

As the Foreign Service community has moved in the past decade toward a more expeditionary approach to diplomacy, personnel have been assigned to war zones and other dangerous areas. Beyond the risk to their lives, employees and family members sometimes face severe stress and trauma, and can sustain damage to their careers, self-respect, self-esteem, and relationships.

Nonetheless, an extraordinary number of Foreign Service colleagues and family members who undergo devastating experiences emerge undamaged and energized. Consider Kathleen Stafford, who recently became famous when depicted in the Oscar-winning film “Argo.” A first-tour Eligible Family Member in Tehran in 1979, she survived the attack on the visa section of the embassy, lived in hiding

and engaged in a bizarre escape. Later in her career, she underwent not one but two evacuations.

Despite this, she remains positive about her life and experiences, and beguilingly flexible. During her last ordered evacuation from post, she used the time to put on an exhibition of her art in Alexandria, Va.

How is it that some people confronted with danger and disruption come out unscathed and even better for the experience? Can this kind of resilience be taught? Can strategies for resilience be inculcated early enough in careers so that the behaviors and attitudes last through to retirement?

To answer these questions, the bureaus of Consular Affairs and Diplomatic Security have working groups looking into developing

resilience as a new body of tradecraft. Correspondingly, the Transition Center at the Foreign Service Institute has developed a series of courses and ad hoc interventions designed to help individuals and groups become more resilient. This work parallels similar efforts by the U.S. military to develop resilience models for soldiers increasingly asked to redeploy to war zones.

Resilience is the attribute that allows people to endure unusual life circumstances and return to a normal equilibrium. Tactics that, in the short term, help one deal with stressful environments help increase resilience, including good sleep; healthy diet; aerobic exercise; positive mental attitude and maintaining networks of family, friends and colleagues.

But there are also long-term principles that one can follow, particularly in a career that will include a variety of assignments, including those to unaccompanied posts. One is choosing a career path that alternates higher-threat and/or more stressful assignments with less-demanding jobs.

Some people are drawn to high-stress posts and bounce from one unaccompanied tour to the next. But, beyond the pay and “adrenaline rush,” there’s a long-term drain on the individual’s store of resilience, a weakening of supportive family and social networks, and even the potential to skew one toward a jaundiced view of humanity. The cumulative stress can be harmful, and greater exposure to threats and dangers may eventually lead to a serious crisis.

Jerry White, deputy assistant secretary in the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations, has written extensively on post-crisis resilience, including a 2009 book “Getting Up When Life Knocks You Down: Five Steps to Overcoming a Life Crisis.” His steps include facing facts and accepting reality, choosing to fully engage in restoring one’s life, reaching out and maintaining personal social networks, identifying and accomplishing goals and giving back to



Jerry White, deputy assistant secretary in the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations, has written extensively on post-crisis resilience. Photo by Emily Geise

one’s community by participating in altruistic activities.

After the murder of three people associated with the U.S. Consulate General in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, in March 2010, one of the most striking findings was that those who were involved in altruistic activities in the following months were better able to manage the stress of living and working in a hostile environment. Reaching out to help others helps to restore one’s own resilience.

Building the resilience of the foreign affairs community can come only from building up the capacities of employees and family members, understanding the relationship between short-term choices and long-term outcomes, learning new skills to prepare for expeditionary diplomacy and preparing for resilience as early in one’s career as possible. It is never too late to make a concerted effort to rebuild one’s resilience, but waiting for a

crisis is clearly not the best time to begin.

While each person’s road to resilience will differ, FSI offers several courses (see below) that can help identify effective strategies for developing resilience. In addition, there are great materials on the Internet, and the Department offers organizational support for resilience-related initiatives, such as workplace wellness, alcohol and tobacco cessation, and meditation and yoga classes. It also is taking action to stop such stressors as workplace injustice (such as gender, race and ethnic inequality), orientation bias, bullying and tyrannical leadership styles.

The challenges are abundant, but so too are the resources that each individual can bring to bear. Spending time building one’s own resilience, and the resilience of one’s family, directly contributes to the strength and resilience of the Department and the community. It is never too early to begin.

FSI Courses Promote Resilience

FSI’s Transition Center defines resilience as a proactive approach to managing stress, crisis and trauma. The center offers courses and briefings dedicated to preparing the Department’s domestic and overseas community members for what is often stressful and emotional work.

The training approaches focus on practical and immediate applicability within the foreign affairs context. Sessions focus on mindfulness, building personal resilience into daily routines and positive communications.

The current courses include:

MQ502 Resilience Strategies for Overseas Success: This one-day course for employees and eligible family members offers tips for integrating resilience into everyday routine to maximize an overseas

tour. Couples are encouraged to take the course together to gain insight on how to strengthen their relationship while living a nomadic life.

MQ500 Encouraging Resilience in the Foreign Service Child:

Raising children in the Foreign Service is a great opportunity, but can feel overwhelming and uncertain. This evening seminar lets parents focus on the important resilience-building aspects of raising children overseas and suggests tips for handling obstacles.

Transition Center trainers have worked with the Bureau of Consular Affairs’ Overseas Citizen Services and the Operations Center to provide special personal resilience training for employees with particularly high exposure to tension-filled phone calls. The center also provides an introductory session on building resilience for new Foreign Service specialists during their orientation. ■

Public Affairs Officer Sean McIntosh and Community Liaison Officer Alandra Ellington-McIntosh hold their children Julian, left, and Aurielle in the courtyard of the U.S. Embassy in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.
Photo by John Padula



Success Secrets

Family Members Share Career Tips

By Tina Tran Neville, family member, U.S. Consulate General in Tijuana

Not every family member who follows his or her Foreign Service spouse to post will become as famous as Julia Child, a USIA officer's spouse who parlayed a talent for French cooking into best-selling books and a popular TV show.

But family members of Foreign Service officers are an eclectic bunch with an array of impressive talents; they're wine critics, fashion designers, investment bankers, consultants, entrepreneurs and teachers. What they prefer not to be is "trailing spouses," an archaic term that many, including me, see as having negative connotations.

When I became a Foreign Service family member, I naturally sought out the views of others in that situation, asking how they've achieved success. I received excellent feedback from, among others, Alandra Ellington-McIntosh, Scott Beale and Sarah Genton.

Genton said her life in the Foreign Service began in 1987 when she left a public relations career and joined her husband, Foreign Service Officer Thomas Genton, in a world full of adventure and uncertainty. For the first few tours, she said she felt like a "duck out of water," but by the fourth tour she had found her bearings.

She credits her supportive husband, who "always took into consideration what places worked well for me." With postings in Harare, Yaounde, Ouagadougou, San Salvador, La Paz, Paramaribo, Madrid and Washington, D.C., Genton immersed herself in opportunities. She served as the community liaison officer (CLO) in five posts. In Bolivia, after volunteering with an international development organization, she ran the embassy's Global Employment Initiative office, which helps family

members with resumes, interview skills and employment options. She also did freelance work in Web design and content management. For one Washington tour, she served in the Family Liaison Office (FLO), and said that opened her eyes to the support FLO provides families. She's now coordinator for the Overseas Briefing Center.

Genton, who raised two children while doing all of this, says diplomatic spouses should be open to opportunities and realistic about challenges. They should also use the resources available, including Foreign Service Institute classes, the Facebook page of the Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide (AAFSW) and the Professional Partners/Spouses of Foreign Service site on LinkedIn. There's also a "LiveLines" Yahoo group, FSI's Transition Center, FLO, each post's CLO and other spouses.



Above: Scott Beale and wife Courtney have drinks at a restaurant in Mexico. *Photo courtesy of Scott Beale;*
Below: The author, right, huddles with husband Paul Neville, political-economic officer in Chiang Mai, Thailand, aboard a raft on the Mae Rim River during their first tour in Chiang Mai. *Photo courtesy of the author.*

Genton's advice: "Try everything that's in front of you."

Another spouse, Scott Beale, began his foray in the Foreign Service lifestyle in New Delhi in 2004, where his new Foreign Service officer wife, Courtney Beale, began her first assignment. Beale, who'd worked at an organization called Ashoka promoting youth social entrepreneurship and in the Clinton White House, said his Eligible Family Member (EFM) position at the embassy led him to meet inspiring nonprofit leaders. He noted that these leaders had had little opportunity to volunteer and learn in the United States.

So, he founded Atlas Corps for young nonprofit leaders. Over the course of eight years—a period covering additional tours with his wife in Bogotá, Washington, Islamabad and Monterrey—Beale's Atlas Corps has provided 155 nonprofit leaders from 49 countries opportunities to serve in the United States at such major organizations as the Grameen Foundation, UNICEF, the Peace Corps and Susan G. Komen for the Cure.

"Atlas Corps has eight employees based in Washington, D.C., and I manage the entire team from overseas," Beale said.

He attributes Atlas Corps' success to "lots of hard work and even more help from others," including the Foreign Service community. He's posted on Yahoo's "Livelines," seeking volunteers to donate and read applications, and "people email me back to help," he said.

Beale advises family members to "explore your passions."

Another family member, Alandra Ellington-McIntosh, was an electrical engineer in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office in Washington when she met her FSO husband, Sean McIntosh. They continued dating after he left for his first tour in Ho Chi Minh City. Later, she joined him and they married.

She found her first four months difficult, not knowing the language and experiencing culture shock, but got a part-time job as a math teacher at a local university and later a full-time EFM position. She said subsequent tours in Asunción and Phnom Penh proved easier, since she'd learned to navigate this new lifestyle.

Now community liaison office coordinator in Phnom Penh, Ellington-McIntosh says she often provides spouses with advice about

employment and volunteer opportunities. It's not always easy to find jobs overseas, she said, but the State Department has made a concerted effort to expand the number of EFM positions worldwide.

Now a mother of two young children, she says moving can be stressful, but the Foreign Service affords opportunities to go places and experience things that "most people dream of." She advises other spouses to be adaptable.

For myself, in 2010 I founded a college application consulting business, Transcend Academy, which has an office and manager in Washington that I supervise from afar. After countless late-night calls and flat-lined profits, I have found this isn't so easy, so I'm pivoting to develop an online education platform that I hope will allow me to be more mobile (though still physically removed from investors and professional contacts).

My advice is to undertake activities with your FSO spouse. My husband, Paul Neville, and I recently completed a tour in Chiang Mai, Thailand, and are now at the Foreign Service Institute learning Spanish, preparing for a tour in Tijuana. We communicate often about the joys and struggles of this rewarding, yet unusual life. When we do, we realize we can do it together. ■



Double Duty



Megan Peiler and her husband, Bill, gather with members of a band that performed at an Embassy New Delhi event.
Photo by Sarah Duffy

Tandem Couples Balance Career, Family

By Gabrielle Hampson, communications and outreach officer, Family Liaison Office

Since 2003, the number of the Department's tandem couples overseas has increased by almost 47 percent. In fact, tandems, in which both spouses or same-sex domestic partners are in the Foreign Service, now constitute more than 10 percent of all Foreign Service employees.

With the growth of tandems have come greater challenges in finding assignments that balance careers and family life. Successful tandem couples plan early, do their research and remain flexible. They use the Career Development and Assignments Office (CDA) to navigate the assignment process and the Family Liaison Office (FLO) to help navigate Foreign Service life.

"We plan as far ahead as possible and have had great communication with our respective career development officers (CDO) and bureaus," said Brigid Weiller, who has been in a tandem with her husband, Matt, for almost a decade.

The Weillers have also served apart, on unaccompanied tours, the first in 2002 when Matt went to Afghanistan and Brigid stayed in Washington with their children.

Later, they took turns doing solo assignments during their four-year posting to Jakarta, with Brigid spending the first year in Islamabad and Matt spending the last year in Baghdad.

"We've received incredible support from FLO, from our colleagues and from our front offices," Brigid said. "The Department has shown extraordinary growth in terms of helping, not just tandem couples, but any employees going off to unaccompanied or hardship tours."

A tandem couple can find bidding on jobs especially tricky at the entry level, where employees must meet tenure requirements. In their directed assignments, an entry-level officer is the "lead bidder" for his or her first two tours. The partner's prospects are considered, but if the tenured officer can't secure an assignment at the same post as his or her partner, it is unlikely the entry-level officer's assignment will be broken.

Eligible family members (EFMs) considering joining the Foreign Service have much to consider, including matching the timing of their spouse/partner's onward posting. They can defer entry for up to

two years if their partner is on assignment abroad and they want to join him or her on the next tour. But there isn't always an available entry-level opportunity in the same location as a partner's onward assignment, since assignments made during an employee's orientation are subject to the Department's needs.

Alicia Edwards, CDA's entry-level tandem coordinator and a tandem herself, advises tenured tandems to explore all options, if not offered a position. Consider taking leave without pay (LWOP), she said, filling a later vacancy via in-country language training or taking language training at FSI on salary, hoping a job will open at post. (This is available to the unassigned member of a tandem couple who may be going to a post in LWOP status where the language would be an asset, since a need may subsequently arise there.)

Alicia and her husband, Bevan, are mulling their own options. "Since my onward mid-level assignment is three years and my husband's entry-level assignment is limited to two, either he'll bid on a one-

year unaccompanied tour, or I'll request a curtailment under the Cohen Rule to align my tour of duty with his," she said.

Some Foreign Service specialists, such as medical officers or construction engineers, have a limited pool of posts available to them, making it difficult for specialist-specialist tandems to line up assignments together. For specialists Ingrid and Tom Johnston, LWOP may be the only option. Steve, a Bureau of Diplomatic Security employee, said his bidding cycles and processing dates didn't match Ingrid's. He has an onward assignment, but "to maintain the family unit, I may have to go to post on LWOP," Ingrid said.

Elisa Greene, a consular officer in the Bureau of African Affairs, is married to a security technical specialist with limited overseas options. She said she and her spouse take turns being the lead bidder and have found it is easier to be posted together in Washington than to serve separately overseas.

Intra-agency tandems have other concerns, such as the fact that the Department and USAID bidding cycles are different, and

USAID assignments are usually in the developing world. At least one Department employee had to forgo an in-cone assignment so that he could be posted to where his partner could also serve. He expressed frustration at not serving in his cone, but said it's worth it to stay together.

Some tandems believe it's easier to land good tandem assignments if each has different job cones or skill codes. "When I joined [the Foreign Service], I deliberately chose public diplomacy so that we would have different cones; this made it easier for us to get tandem assignments," said Michelle Schohn, whose spouse, Mary Glantz, is a political officer.

Others believe that, regardless of skill code or cone, it is almost always easiest to bid when both partners are mid-level, since those in senior ranks find bidding complicated due to nepotism issues. That's especially true when one partner is chief of mission, DCM or principal officer.

When Jemile Bertot and her spouse were mid-level employees, "we had many more options to be assigned together; now that we

are both senior-level, we realistically cannot be assigned to the same overseas post," said Bertot, CDA's mid-level CDO.

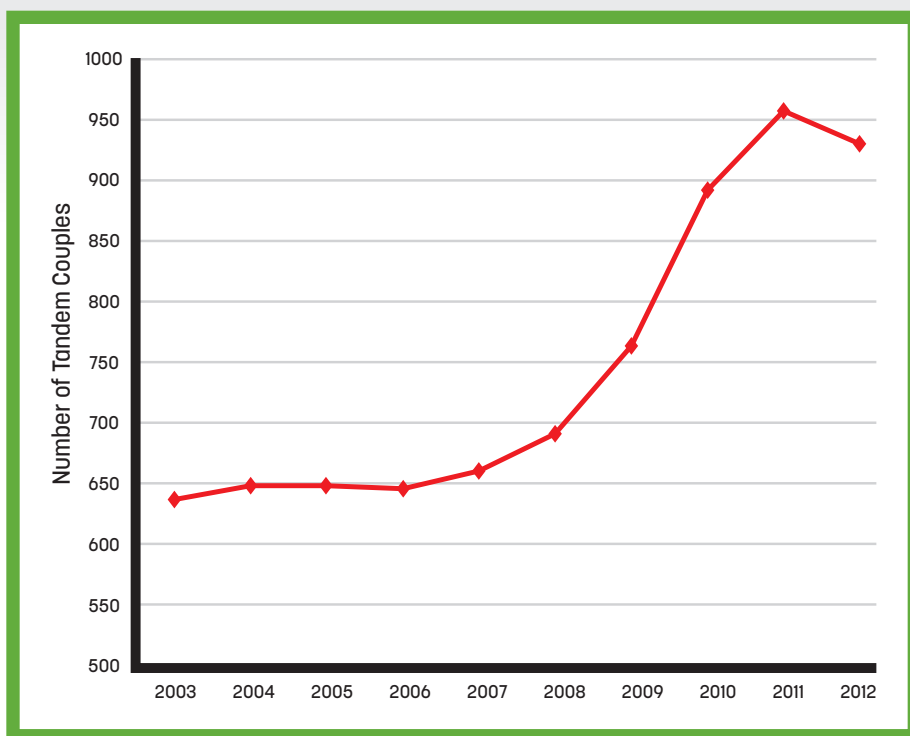
Dana Smith, a senior-level public diplomacy officer married to a specialist, said that in the past few years she has become lead bidder "simply because my opportunities had to become more targeted as I took on leadership roles." As mid-level bidders, she and husband, Ray, a DS Special Agent, would "narrow down the bid list to every single post that had an at-grade job for each of us and then we worked through our priorities within those," she said.

CDA encourages tandem employees to consider creative options when bidding. For example, Jemile Bertot completed in-country language training and also held full-time positions in succession for three different bureaus when posted overseas with her husband. Megan Peiler, an entry-level officer in New Delhi with husband, Bill, in their first overseas tour together, said she would "rather do an out-of-cone assignment that doesn't necessarily help my career progression, and live in the same country"



Mary Glantz, left, and Michelle Schohn are all smiles at the annual embassy holiday party in Tallinn, Estonia. Photo by Filipp Mustonen; Right: Natasha Burney and her family visit the Madurodam, during an R&R in the Netherlands. Photo by Maria DeVeyra





Though the number of tandem couples increased from 635 in 2003 to 931 in 2012, tandems have consistently accounted for approximately 10% of couples.

as her spouse. Many tandems spend additional time working in Washington or on long-term training to stay together.

Other creative ways to navigate the tandem bidding process besides out-of-cone assignments include doing up-stretch or down-stretch assignments. When Natasha Burney and her husband head to Jerusalem, she'll be in an up-stretch human resources position and her husband will be in a down-stretch office management specialist position. "It's a give and take," she acknowledged.

When bidding, tandems often must consider noncareer matters such as options for their children or even eldercare. "Quite frankly, our three kids have been the 'lead bidders' over the past several years, given that the availability and quality of schools have driven our bidding strategies," Matt Weiller said.

Tandems with young children find reliable childcare a concern in some countries. FLO's Overseas Childcare Reports (available on FLO's HR Portal) can help tandems looking to go overseas, and FLO's education and youth team offers education guidance and resources for FS families.

"Arriving at post is especially difficult—particularly arranging childcare when both employees are required to be in the office," said Sara Devlin, whose husband, Andrew, joined her at the beginning of her third tour.

Tandem parents must decide to whose orders they will add the children. Some place their children on the orders of the employee whose expected arrival at post coincides with school schedules. Others place them on the orders of the higher-ranking employee, taking advantage of the maximum space authorization for housing. Regardless, FLO recommends that children be listed as eligible family members on both Employee Profiles so that during an unexpected departure from post, such as an evacuation, they can be quickly added to travel orders.

Being flexible, setting priorities and making informed decisions are all part of the assignments and bidding process. For more information, check out the Facebook group for tandems or visit the online group Tandemonium. FLO's resources, including information for unaccompanied tours, are available at state.gov/m/dghr/flo. A list of the Department's commuter posts is at diplopedia.state.gov/index.php?title=Commuter_Posts. ■

Tips for Tandems from Tandems

Among the tips offered by tandem couples and assignments officers are:

- Review and update your OF-126 in HROnline and check to ensure dependent children are listed as EFMs on each of your employee profiles (and in MyItinerary as eligible travelers) and that your partner is listed as "TANDEM (Agency)."
- Ensure, when returning to Washington for long-term training, that both partners are either in temporary duty (TDY) status or assignment to Washington status (PCS).
- Consider a tour in Human Resources, where what you learn about the assignments process as a CDO or assignments officer will serve you well later.
- Be resourceful and consider less-traditional options such as unaccompanied tours, hard-to-fill posts and "commuter" posts (posts in close proximity such as Jerusalem and Tel Aviv). Other options: teleworking overseas from a domestic position, excursion opportunities at other agencies, up- and down-stretch positions and out-of-cone assignments.
- Review the projected vacancy lists to find posts with positions for both of you, and when the bid list is released, list the posts with appropriate tandem prospects and start lobbying them early.
- Acquire the same foreign languages.
- Get and stay on the same bidding cycle, by taking a one year assignment, serving at an unaccompanied post or using another creative option.
- When lobbying for positions, let your bureaus and your CDOs know you're in a tandem and explain why you are the best candidate.
- Be realistic, recognizing that your arrival months on a tandem assignment might not coincide perfectly or that you might not always be able to work in your skill code or at grade.
- Be flexible, having a Plan A, B, C and D.

EYE-OPENER

Exchange Students Thrive in Bosnia and Herzegovina

By Thomas E. Mesa, public affairs officer,
U.S. Embassy in Sarajevo

As the female members of a local family gathered for the traditional prayers of remembrance on the anniversary of the head of the family's death, their sacred "tevhid" ritual, a key Muslim custom, was made even more special because one of the invited females was not a family member or even a long-time friend of the family.

She was an American teenager in Sarajevo under the auspices of the Department's YES Abroad program.

The student said it was a surprise and a privilege to have been invited to witness this private moment in the life of her host family. She added that it gave her a new perspective on the importance of prayer and family in Islam.

For another student on the exchange, her Christian belief helped her better understand Muslim beliefs and practices. Through conversation with friends and her study of Islam, she found the gulf between the two major religions is not as wide as she had thought.

The experiences of these two students exemplify the spirit of the YES Abroad program, which involves a close encounter with another culture and society, and a personal look at the core of everyday life there. Administered by the American Councils in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), the program offers American high-school students and recent graduates a full scholarship for up to one academic year to live and study abroad in countries with significant Muslim populations. Eleven countries have a YES Abroad program, but this was the first year that the program was offered in BiH.

The five U.S. students, who return to the United States in June, are enrolled in the Baccalaureate (IB) Program at the Druga Gimnazija (Second Gymnasium), an elite academic institution in Sarajevo that conducts classes in English with a college prep focus. They have found it an eye-opening experience.

The students, who prefer not to be quoted by name, say they admire the seriousness and dedication of the teachers in the IB program, but also the intellectual debates with their Bosnian classmates that reveal different angles to an issue.

That's especially true in their history class. "It is one thing to sit in the U.S. and study European history detached from Europe, and another being in Europe where the issues we study are closer and feel more real," said one student.

The American students are surrounded by stories of the 1992-1995 war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the suffering it caused.

The director of the IB program, Tomo Maltar, said he is pleased with the how well the students have adapted to the school and excelled in the classroom. "Not only have they brought great insights about American society into our discussions, but they have dispelled the prejudice of some of our students, drawn

from watching movies and hearing of violence in American schools, who wondered whether the American educational system produces good students," he said. "The proof of excellence was right before them."

Outside the classroom, the students flourished in Sarajevo, a city with a rich history dating back more than 500 years, but still marked by the scars of war and struggling to maintain its multicultural and multi-ethnic heritage. They went bowling, watched movies, relaxed with classmates and friends and explored Sarajevo, especially its old town. They also travelled to ancient fortresses and the birthplace of Ivan Andric, winner of the Nobel Literature Prize in 1961, in Travnik.

One student said she was especially impressed by ordinary Bosnians' kindness and "interest in me as a person." A sales lady who spoke with her in Bosnian, a baker who always says hello and remembers her love of cornbread, and a gentleman who once held the bus for her were all engaged in "sincere acts of kindness... [that] strengthen my faith in humanity and make me more aware of how possible it is to bridge cultural differences," she said.

Volunteerism is encouraged in the YES Abroad Program, and the five students have spent several Saturdays at an orphanage with special-needs youths, working for two hours at a time helping them with English thought games during play periods.

The American teens were treated as family members by their host families, who told them folk wisdom, such as keeping doors and windows closed to avoid the evils of a draft, and weather wisdom, such as how to dress for the chill of a wintry night. They shared jokes over coffee and debated events of the day while watching the evening news.

The students talked with their classmates, friends and host families about life in the United States, and shared their BiH experiences with their U.S. families and friends.

"Some of my [U.S.] friends have actually gone and read more about BiH after reading my blog," said one student.

Several of the U.S. students say the exchange has changed their world view and given them a greater appreciation for the U.S. role in the world. What happens in BiH, a small country, may not have repercussions outside its borders, but what happens in the United States may have international repercussions, one student concluded.

After they return in June to their homes in Arizona, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Oregon and Michigan, several of the students may pursue international studies, such as Slavic studies or international business. Several said the bonds created during this past year, especially with their host families, will draw them back to BiH. There is a saying in Sarajevo that those who drink the mountain waters of the Sebilj Fountain in the heart of the old town will find their way back to Sarajevo one day. The exchange students have drunk from that fountain, and time will tell whether the prediction comes true. ■

Exchange student Katie Wells, far right, visits a local historic site with her host family.
Photo courtesy of Katie Wells





Conservation Mascot

Rhino Sculpture a Work of Many Hands

By Sulaiman Toghrul, student intern, U.S. Consulate General in Durban, South Africa

South Africa is home to 95 percent of Africa's white rhino population and nearly 40 percent of all wild black rhinos worldwide. Unfortunately, rhino poaching in South Africa has increased dramatically, from an average of 14 rhinos poached per year until 2005 then a surge starting in 2006 that took the level to 668 rhinos in 2012.

This dramatic increase has galvanized the nation's civil society and authorities to find innovative solutions to the crisis, and provided a way for the U.S. Mission in South Africa to work with local partners to promote conservation. Doing its part,

the U.S. Consulate General in Durban has worked with USAID, and several embassy offices, including International Narcotics and Law Enforcement, public affairs and regional security, to support the fight against wildlife trafficking.

To highlight the plight of the endangered rhino, the Consulate teamed with Durban's eThekweni [Durban] Community Foundation (eCF) and the Wildlife Conservation Trust to engage community artists to create a hand-decorated, three-quarter-size rhino sculpture called "Nkanyezi" ("Shining Star" in Zulu). The sculpture has found a home at King

Shaka International Airport in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) Province. Video of its March unveiling there is available online.

At the unveiling, Deputy Assistant Secretary for African Affairs Reuben Brigety II and Consul General Taylor V. Ruggles told an audience of community leaders, government officials, media, artists, educators and the public of the U.S. commitment to combat wildlife trafficking, and urged everyone to join in the fight against rhino poaching. Nkanyezi is a tangible, accessible symbol for the hundreds of thousands of travelers who pass through the airport monthly, reflecting

Nkanyezi draws attention at King Shaka International Airport. It is made from wire, beads, recycled yarn and plastic, repurposed metals and ceramics.

Photo by Val Adamson





Clockwise from above: A close-up of the sculpture shows its detailed craftsmanship. *Photo by Consulate General Durban;* From left, ECF Director Kathryn Kure; Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Reuben Brigety; Lauren Laing, brand and communications manager, Wildlands Conservation Trust; Taylor Ruggles, consul general, U.S. Consulate General in Durban; and Dr. Andrew Venter, CEO of the Wildlands Conservation Trust, gather at the rhino sculpture; Consul General in Durban Taylor Ruggles addresses guests at the launch of the Nkanyezi sculpture. *Photos by Val Adamson*

the U.S. and South African commitment to save this natural resource. Nkanyezi was seen in Durban by delegates attending the March summit of the BRICS nations—Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

“The fact that the consulate participated enthusiastically alongside the community in giving breath to this project is no small deal,” said Robin Opperman, design director at Umebo, one of the NGO participants. “U.S. support for initiatives to save our rhinos is critical to future success. We cannot do it alone.”

Nkanyezi’s creation was a collaboration among artists from divergent backgrounds. The local partners involved in it wanted it to be beautiful and reflect the cultural and artistic backgrounds of the racial groups, genders, religions and socioeconomic backgrounds in KZN, the homeland of the Zulu nation. These local craft groups developed creative motifs, and their work showed their enthusiasm for wildlife conservation and made

clear the links between conservation and their livelihoods. Many of those involved in making the sculpture depend on revenue from South African tourism, and can thus see preserving the rhino and the wildlife ecosystem as good business practice.

Pieces of the sculpture bring to mind Bollywood, and this reference to the Indian film industry makes sense since KZN’s ethnic Indian population is the largest population of those of Indian heritage in any nation other than India. Other parts of the sculpture feature intricate Zulu beadwork, wherein every color has a meaning. Yet other aspects draw on pop culture and Americana, such as its use of Coca-Cola bottle caps as tile.

The sculpture’s design is based on that of the USA/South Africa friendship pin, and the craft groups involved in the sculpture reinterpreted the two flags on the pin using their preferred media, such as crocheted recycled plastic and glittering ceramics. One side of Nkanyezi evokes the colors of the

U.S. flag and the other, colors of the South African flag. That reference is a “testament to the partnership between nations,” said eCF Director Kathryn Kure.

“The rhino belongs to all of us,” she said, adding that she hoped the nation’s people could unite to save “these magnificent, amazing creatures, and remember anew our duty of care to protect and cherish all the thing of this earth.”

Nkanyezi has been featured in local newspapers and catches the eye of those rushing to catch flights or pick up loved ones; they all slow down to delight in its eclectic assortment of craft traditions.

The next steps on Nkanyezi’s journey are still to be decided. She’s now a coveted guest at regional forums, and the post hopes she will continue to spread her message of U.S.-South African partnership on wildlife conservation around South Africa or the world. More information is on the embassy website at southafrica.usembassy.gov. ■



Post of the Month



The rising sun reflects off the Himalayas,
as seen from the eastern rim of the
Kathmandu Valley.

Photo by John Healey/jhph.asia

Kathmandu

Nepal Offers Much More Than Mountains

By Keith West, vice consul, U.S. Embassy in Kathmandu





Post of the Month

Cultural Affairs Officer Cain Harrelson takes public outreach to new heights while visiting Nepal's remote Mustang district in support of the Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation.

Photo by Embassy Kathmandu



Nepal's striking beauty is visible before visitors even touch the ground in Kathmandu. Passengers gazing from their windows northward as their airplane descends are transfixed by the commanding Himalayan range: Hundreds of snow-capped peaks jut skyward, seemingly at eye-level and within arm's reach. More pleasures await after touchdown. The entire Kathmandu Valley is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Seven culturally and historically significant locations, including some of holiest sites in the Hindu and Buddhist traditions, inhabit the valley floor.

The founder of modern Nepal, Prithvi Narayan Shah, famously described his new nation as a "yam between two boulders." Wedged between its two massive neighbors, China and India, this small country is astoundingly diverse in geography and population. More than 26 million people live in an area roughly the size of Iowa. They reside on tropical plains, temperate hills and frigid mountainsides. Over the span of only 100 miles, the terrain rises steeply from just above sea level in the southern plains to tens of thousands of feet in the Himalayas, home to eight of the world's ten highest peaks.

After centuries of rule by monarchs and oligarchs, Nepal is now a burgeoning democracy. A decade-long civil war ended through a negotiated peace brokered in 2006 between Maoist insurgents and an array of political parties. These forces united the following year in a "people's movement" that overthrew Nepal's monarchy and established a republican democracy, with national elections held in 2008. The nation appears resolved to meet the challenges ahead, including holding new elections, writing a new constitution and establishing a transitional justice mechanism to address conflict-era human rights violations. The path to stability and prosperity remains steep, but the U.S. Embassy in Kathmandu is helping Nepal reach these goals.

Kathmandu is considered a mystical place, evoking images of a utopian Shangri-la. Legend has it that the valley was once a huge lake with a perfect lotus flower floating in the center. To reach the lotus, Manjusri, the saint of wisdom, cut the lake's edge with his flaming sword, draining the water. The lotus settled on the valley floor and became a prominent hill, on



From top: Embassy staff members work in the chancery's community garden, which provides vegetables for the cafeteria; Female staffers, American and Nepali, perform a traditional dance in celebration of the Teej holiday, during which Hindu women fast and pray for their husbands' health and long life; Ambassador Peter Bodde, right, and his father, retired Ambassador William Bodde, second from right, discuss their Foreign Service careers spanning 65 years in a mentoring session for new embassy officers.

Photos by Embassy Kathmandu



Top: Kathmandu residents and visitors circle the Boudhanath stupa, one of the holiest Buddhist sites in the world. *Photo by John Healey/jhph. asia; Above:* American and Nepali embassy staff bring “football” to Thanksgiving Day by competing in the annual Turkey Bowl on the athletic fields of the American Club. *Photo by Embassy Kathmandu*

which the holy Swayambhunath Buddhist stupa now rests. An observer perched there can see that while today’s Kathmandu remains exotic and beautiful, mythical Shangri-la it is not.

With more than two million residents

and growing, this small-town-turned-metropolis has many of the challenges one would expect in a developing city, such as traffic congestion, poor air quality and an unreliable electrical grid. Yet Kathmandu also possesses abundant uncommon assets that make for a gratifying Foreign Service tour like few others.

The U.S. Mission to Nepal occupies a prime location a short drive from the city’s active center, but also convenient to peaceful pine-forested parks in the valley’s northern hills. Most families live in houses surrounded by small, landscaped yards; others occupy modern apartments and town homes. No

commute exceeds 20 minutes by car, and many embassy employees walk to work.

Kathmandu’s climate is delightfully temperate; the city, at 4,600 feet, is almost 1,000 feet lower than Denver. It never snows. Kathmandu is relatively safe for a city of its size, thanks in large part to the open-hearted friendliness of its people. Attitudes toward the United States are favorable, and many Nepalis are eager to share their culture with visitors.

Most anything, from a taxi ride to a Tibetan rug, is inexpensive in Nepal, compared to Western prices. Dinner and a movie usually cost well under \$20. Families with young children can find high-quality but affordable childcare. Most dependent school-aged children attend the pre-K through 12th grade Lincoln School, but French and British schools are also available.

When it is time to recharge the batteries, Kathmandu and the surrounding countryside offer embassy staff an array of experiences and grand adventures. The city is chock full of hidden-gem restaurants and walled manicured gardens that provide tranquil oases from the busy streets. Those seeking greater peace and spiritual reflection might take a meditation retreat at a Buddhist monastery, join pilgrims in circumambulating the enchanting Boudhanath stupa or simply wander the narrow red-brick alleyways of nearby Bhaktapur, the ancient Hindu “City of Devotees.”

Opportunities to commune with nature abound. Himalayan treks, including to the Mt. Everest base camp, are popular with mission staff, as is riding elephants through Chitwan National Park in search of tigers, leopards and rhinos. And for the adrenaline junkie, Nepal’s extreme terrain lends itself to such sports as mountain biking, canyoneering, bungee jumping and whitewater rafting.

Embassy Kathmandu is a medium-size post doing big things. Approximately 80 direct-hire Americans from the departments of State, Defense and Justice, as well as USAID, implement a wide-ranging assistance portfolio. An additional 20 positions for eligible family members offer rewarding work in diverse and substantive portfolios, such as public diplomacy, disaster risk reduction, trafficking in persons, refugee issues and democracy and governance.

Political and economic officers cover a range of issues, from analyzing the latest twists of Nepal’s democracy to helping U.S. investors navigate Nepal’s bureaucracy. Opportunities to speak in schools or at the post’s seven American Corners are open to all American employees. The innovative Embassy Youth

Council encourages leadership development and gives voice to some of Nepal's most dynamic young people. Through the English Access Program, 208 disadvantaged students have attained superior English language skills.

Consular officers stay busy with the highly popular diversity visa program and supporting American citizens who flock to Nepal to trek its hills and valleys and seek enlightenment in its ashrams and monasteries. The management section spearheaded greening initiatives that have saved several hundred thousand dollars and resulted in Embassy Kathmandu winning the Department's 2012 Greening Diplomacy Initiative Award. USAID manages transformational programs on health, food security, climate change and democracy and governance, while DOD and DOJ colleagues help strengthen the capacity and professionalism of Nepal's security forces.

As Nepal is located in a seismically active region, promoting earthquake preparedness and assisting Nepal with disaster-risk reduction initiatives are top priorities. The Disaster Risk Reduction Office is unique to Embassy Kathmandu and mobilizes all resources at post to address disaster-risk reduction and emergency preparedness. An Emergency Action Committee, Disaster Working Group and Medical Emergency Response Team coordinate internal preparations such as Community Emergency Response Training (disaster response workshops offered to new employees and their families). Education seminars cover the mission's earthquake response plan, accessing earthquake kits, locating rally points, packing "go" as well as "stay" bags, operating emergency communication equipment, recognizing earthquake alarms and practicing basic first aid training. Additionally, the embassy runs numerous interagency programs that support the government of Nepal in mitigating the effects of all types of natural disasters.

The Regional Refugee Office of the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration based at the embassy oversees humanitarian assistance to Tibetan refugees in Nepal and India, and has guided the resettlement of approximately 65,000 Bhutanese refugees to the United States since 2007. The Refugee Office collaborates with NGOs providing health, education and vocational services to Sri Lankan refugees in Tamil Nadu, India, and with the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees to provide protection to urban refugees from Somalia, Pakistan, Burma and elsewhere who reside in Colombo, New Delhi and Kathmandu.

Kathmandu's myriad attributes and rewarding work keep morale in the embassy community high, so it's not surprising that many officers return repeatedly. The current deputy chief of mission is on her second Kathmandu tour, while Ambassador Peter Bodde is back for a third time. So if the arriving airplane's prized northward facing window seats are occupied, it may be they're occupied by knowing passengers on a return trip to Kathmandu. ■

Post of the Month



At a Glance

Nepal

Capital: Kathmandu

Government type: Federal democratic republic

Area: 147,181 sq. km.

Comparative area: Slightly larger than Iowa

Population: 30.4 million

Languages: Nepali (official), Maithali, Bhojpuri, Tharu, Tamang, Newar, Magar, Awadhi and others

GDP—per capita: \$1,300

Export partners: India, US and Germany

Export commodities: Clothing, pulses (legumes), carpets, textiles, juice, pashima and jute goods

Import commodities: Petroleum products, machinery and equipment, gold, electrical goods and medicine

Import partners: India and China

Currency: Nepalese rupees (NPR)

Embassy Web site: nepal.usembassy.gov

Twitter handle: @usembassynepal

Facebook page: www.facebook.com/nepal.usembassy

Source: Country Background Notes



The Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in Brasilia comes together on Consular Leadership Day 2013.
Photo by Richard Salazar

Unified Team

Nationwide Visa Focus Reduces Backlog in Brazil

By Laura Chamberlin, Special Assistant at the U.S. Embassy in Brasilia

In the summer of 2011, the small crew of consular officers at U.S. posts in Brazil was swamped by visa applicants, and wait times for interviews had swollen to 140 days.

So consular managers in Brazil developed an ambitious goal: Combat the wait time while improving morale. Minister Counselor for Consular Affairs Don Jacobson transformed four separate posts into Consular Team Brazil (CTB), which brought consistency and minimized duplication of effort across the mission. He established mission-wide working groups dedicated to metrics, training and outreach, which allowed CTB to track, teach and tout progress.

When President Barack Obama expanded the options for Brazilians to get visa interview waivers, as part of the U.S. effort to boost Brazilian tourism in the United States, the four unified posts were able to quickly

determine how to implement the new rules.

To wade through the backlog of 230,000 applicants in the appointment queue, CTB instituted shift work, doubling the utility of the interview windows while preserving time off the line, staff meetings and training days. Assistant Secretary Janice Jacobs and the Bureau of Consular Affairs provided unwavering support in the form of temporary staffers, new permanent staff and expanded consular spaces.

"Give us the right resources and we will rock!" said Alba Bezerra, a senior Locally Employed (LE) Staff member at the U.S. Consulate General in Rio de Janeiro.

Co-workers at posts in Brazil dusted off their consular commissions or staffed the fingerprint machine. Former Brasília Consular Chief Antonia Cassarino said, "One of the best things we did... was involve

staff from other sections. Whether it was an American colleague from the Defense Attaché Office who was fingerprinting applicants, or a LE Staff member from the Foreign Commercial Service translating for non-Portuguese-speaking TDYers, the positive effect was immeasurable."

CTB also relied on innovation, as managers aggressively sought constructive ideas. Every Work Requirements Statement for CTB staff includes a mandate to consider the entire operation and suggest improvements in decision-making, efficiency and service. Employee suggestions were implemented, including painting a hot tin roof white to keep the waiting area cooler and rethinking visa applicant flows. According to Paul Graddon, vice consul at the U.S. Consulate General in São Paulo, "There were innovations small and large—everything

Top: From left, Locally Employed (LE) Staff member Alexandre Lima, Minister Counselor for Consular Affairs Don Jacobson, Vice Consul Tobin Nelsom, LES Francislene Reis and EFM Mariela Bournes participate in a Consular Leadership Day exercise in downtown São Paulo. **Bottom:** São Paulo Vice Consul Don Cordell, right front, explains scheduling procedures to Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs Janice Jacobs while Consulate São Paulo Consular Chief Mike Jacobsen, left, and Minister Counselor for Consular Affairs Don Jacobson look on.

Photos by Evan Fritz

from how we grouped cases to how we conducted training of officers and LE Staff. Sometimes the smallest improvement made the most impact.”

One big triumph that involved a small change was appointment scheduling at Consulate São Paulo. Entry-level officers and mid-level managers tinkered with the appointment system in a bid to get more than 3,000 applicants per day through a space that seated 200. After a false start or two, they hit on opening appointments in 10-minute blocks, and assigned an officer to work with LE Staff and consular greeters to manage the flow. This innovation reduced the time applicants spent in the queue—a time that was already down two hours from the year prior—and brought remarkable calm to the chaos that had been the waiting area.

CTB also had great success with the use of “secondary windows,” where complicated visa cases were sent for more in-depth analysis. That kept the main queue flowing smoothly, helped officers hone their skills and ensured plenty of time for cases requiring extra scrutiny. “Having a manager willing to try different ideas was huge,” said Maura Keniston, vice consul at the U.S. Consulate in Recife. “With freedom to make mistakes, we figured out what worked best.”

The biggest part of the CTB initiative, Mission Brazil’s more than 200 local staff, understood the breadth of the changes and embraced them. The initiative actively solicited their ideas and input. “Compared to our past history, I have never seen so many innovative ideas as we had to survive this crisis,” Bezerra said. “People here are not afraid of telling their ideas. A little failure *também faz parte do sucesso* (is also part of success).”

The days were fast and frenetic, as was the progress. “Even as the number of people we interviewed each day rose, there was a noticeable improvement in morale,” said Morgan Taylor, vice consul at Consulate São Paulo. “The work increased, but with what we gained in efficiency, the feeling of chaos decreased and we had more resources and time to make this a great place to work.”

In fiscal year 2012, CTB adjudicated 1.1 million visa applications, joining the million-plus club with China and Mexico (India is not far behind). Mission Brazil processed almost twice as many visa applications as in fiscal year 2010, but applicants now spend only 30 minutes in waiting rooms. The wait time for an appointment has held steady at two days since June 2012.

“If you get people excited about their jobs, give them the resources to do them and then get out of the way, really cool things happen,” Jacobson observed.

Embassy Brasília Consular Officer Erin Truhler agreed, saying, “It’s motivating to see your ideas implemented, or at least tried, and helps build a strong sense of teamwork.” ■





Radio Active

Haiti 'Hams' Aid in Emergencies

By Brian K. Wingate, former vice consul, U.S. Embassy in Port-au-Prince, Haiti

Since December 2012, the U.S. Embassy in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, has operated a ham radio station for emergency communication during natural disasters with wardens and American citizens throughout Haiti. During emergencies, such as the 2010 earthquake, regular communication systems such as mobile telephones and the Internet are often unavailable.

"Hams," as amateur radio operators are known, constitute a worldwide network of nonprofessional broadcasters who use shortwave frequencies to communicate with each other.

The post's American Citizen Services (ACS) Unit has led the project in partnership with the Radio Club d'Haïti (RCH) and embassy Locally Employed (LE) Staff volunteers. It has drawn together amateur radio operators who, under the call sign HH2USA, now regularly communicate with other hams across Haiti.

The ACS Unit pushed for the project, based on its experience following the January 2010 earthquake. Then, "the U.S. Embassy was completely inaccessible, even to me," said James Arbaugh, a warden from central Haiti. "Telephone calls wouldn't go through,

email wasn't answered. Visiting the embassy was impossible because of the crowds. Nobody could provide reliable information."

Jean-Robert Gaillard, President of the RCH, agreed that conditions then were dire. "There was no power, no phones and of course no Internet," he said. "This was no drill, and nothing worked."

However, both Arbaugh and Gaillard were able to use their ham radios to send news of the quake to those outside the country. They provided information about the status of local people to other hams, who relayed it to concerned family and friends all over the world.

"It's impossible to predict when the next earthquake might strike, but here in Haiti hurricanes are frequent, and when they strike they often disrupt our ability to communicate with our warden network," said Du Tran, ACS Unit chief. "So even though the idea of radio might seem old-fashioned in this digital era, I thought installing a



Above: From left, Joses Jean-Baptiste, technical director at CONATEL; Jean-Robert Gaillard, president of the Radio Club d'Haiti; and the author meet at the donation of Amateur Radio training materials to CONATEL in July. *Photo by Jean Roy Faustin; Right:* At center, Frantz Coulanges, an LE Staff member in the Fraud Prevention Unit, speaks to wardens by radio, attended by, from left, Reynold Samy, an LE Staff member in the Fraud Prevention Unit; Romuald Zamy, cultural affairs assistant; Samantha Pierre-Dantes, an LE Staff member in the ACS Unit; and Vice Consul David Boxer. *Photo by Romuald Zamy*

station at the embassy made sense."

In the project's early stages, organizers noted that several of the post's wardens already were licensed amateur radio operators. But since I was the embassy's only Foreign Service officer ham, the post had to get some of its LE Staff licensed so they could take charge of the radio network. For this, the embassy reached out to Gaillard and the RCH for assistance.

Gaillard said that, on learning about the embassy project, "it was normal that the Haitian hams and the RCH offer their services, as they would to any other hams. We are glad to have done so."

The group collaborated on technical issues, such as what antennas to use and where to install them, and in setting up the "shack" (as the station is known). Many great ideas came to life and friendships were formed.

While four LE Staff and one American contractor studied for their ham licenses, Gaillard and I contacted CONATEL, the Haitian telecommunications authority, about administering a license exam. We learned to our dismay that CONATEL required testing on a subject most other nations no longer required: Morse code. However, after sharing U.S. study materials donated by the American Radio Relay League, we succeeded in having CONATEL remove the Morse code requirement.

Samantha Pierre-Dantes recalled how the LE Staff who volunteered studied as a group after work and on their own. "I like technology, and so I found the material interesting," she said. "And while some of us had some difficulties, we helped each other, and we all passed the test."

The group earned Haitian General Class Amateur Radio licenses, allowing them to operate on the local and long-distance frequencies that permit communication with embassy wardens and even the United States.

The embassy's Regional Security Office and its Facilities, Information Management and Military Liaison offices assisted in obtaining space and materials for the radio shack. Its equipment can operate for days on battery power, provide voice and data communications and send email, even without Internet access.

Embassy radio operators now regularly communicate with wardens and local hams in preparation for possible disruptions in communications. They are supported by hams in the United States who regularly monitor their transmissions. During Tropical Storm Isaac and Hurricane Sandy, embassy wardens used the system to provide weather observations and situation reports to the post and others via ham radio.

Amateur radio can help any overseas mission, and there's often a local ham radio organization ready to lend a hand. The American Radio Relay League (arrl.org) is a point of contact for missions that want to gain country-specific contacts and guidance on licensing and international agreements. This assistance is particularly helpful to those with no radio experience who see ham radio as a viable option for backup emergency communication.



In Haiti, wardens such as Bette Gebrian say they are pleased with the new ham station. "I have always been a bit nervous about concentrating only on cell phones in a place like rural Haiti," she said. "If there is a disaster and phones are out, then we will be prepared with a simple antenna, a battery charged by a solar panel, the radio and many willing hams at the other end." ■

Personnel Recovery

Consular Officer Finds Crisis Training Valuable

By Lindsay Henderson, chief, American Citizen Services, U.S. Consulate General in Frankfurt

“Personnel recovery course? Why are you taking that? You’re just going to Frankfurt.” Yes, although I was just going to Frankfurt, I signed up for the Personnel Recovery Management Course (OT175) at the Bureau of Diplomatic Security’s Diplomatic Security Training Center. Some unexpected consular work during my last assignment made me realize how unprepared I was to handle very intense cases that fell outside the norm of traditional American Citizens Services (ACS) work. This underscored for me that in an era in which U.S. citizens might become targets, I needed additional training to help me view my ACS cases through the lens of personnel recovery.

An organization is defined by the way it handles a crisis. We are not strangers to crisis management at the Department of State. We train for it, practice it and over the past few years, we lived it on a significant scale.

When a crisis strikes at the heart of our mission—when our embassies and consulates are attacked, our schools looted or our colleagues injured or killed—we are truly tested as an organization. Our colleagues are

highly skilled individuals who care deeply about helping others, but we can all do more to prepare ourselves for the worst. It is crucial that our first responders be able to handle the needs of traumatized and possibly injured colleagues at posts in crisis, and at “safe-haven posts” that might receive evacuated employees and their families. Therefore, more Department personnel, particularly in the consular and management cones, should consider taking OT175.

Taking the course was the best decision I made prior to coming to post. Just three weeks after my arrival in Frankfurt, my consular colleagues and I were at Ramstein Air Force Base to meet the plane carrying our Mission Libya colleagues. A few days later, we assisted with the evacuation of embassies in Tunis and Khartoum.

Personnel recovery, traditionally the rescue of military personnel trapped behind enemy lines or held hostage, now refers to anyone who becomes isolated, missing, detained or captured. The course focuses on what isolated persons experience, what their needs are after recovery and how to leverage private and U.S.

government assets to assist in their recovery. Personnel recovery specialists and others from multiple U.S. government agencies discussed the resources offered by each organization. I learned how to work with my post’s regional security officer to access those resources.

Taking the course should be standard training for officers going to danger posts and posts that might serve as safe havens. It would also help if the Department prepared booklets containing the answers to frequently asked questions for both official evacuees and private U.S. citizens. It was quickly apparent when assisting colleagues from Tunis that we did not have immediate answers to their difficult questions. U.S. government employees from several agencies did a great deal over an extended period to take care of our colleagues from Benghazi, Tripoli, Tunis, Khartoum and other posts in September and beyond. Still, we can always improve our planning and response, and apply lessons learned to future events. We owe it to one another to be as prepared as possible for crises, to understand what resources are available and to know how to access those resources. ■



Consulate General Frankfurt Computer Operator Shawn Kayser, right, explains the OpenNet access terminal, which lets consular applications be used at Frankfurt Airport, to Frankfurt Consular Chief Charles Wintheiser. *Department of State photo*

Take a Stand

Sedentary Workers Damage Their Health

By Regina McClelland, occupational safety specialist and ergonomics program manager, Office of Safety, Health and Environmental Management

Stretching is good, as is activity generally. I stretch in my office cubicle, but began stretching more energetically after reading a study by the American Cancer Society that concluded, based on a study of 123,216 people's health over a 14-year period, that women who sat for more than six hours a day were about 40 percent more likely to die than those who sat fewer than three hours per day. Men who sat longer were about 20 percent more likely to die.

The dangers of a sedentary lifestyle have been well publicized, but these statistics are alarming. What we learned is that sitting for extended periods of time does significant damage to human health that cannot be undone by exercise. The study compared the negative health effects of sitting for several hours, but exercising at the end of the day, to being a smoker who exercises to reduce the adverse health effects from smoking. More research needs to be done to standardize measures of sedentary behavior and formulate guidelines, but the message is clear: Stay active at work.

Companies such as Google and Facebook are employing creative solutions to reduce the time that employees are required to sit, but solutions like treadmill computer workstations are a bit extreme: using a keyboard and mouse while walking is hard, even at low speeds. So, how can we minimize the risk of sedentary work without turning to extreme measures or purchasing sit/stand workstations for everyone? Besides going for a lunchtime walk, you should stand up every 45 minutes, such as when you:

- Stretch, walk or perform some other task;
- Read the hard copy of a document;
- Talk to a colleague, hold short meetings, speak on the phone; or
- Sip a beverage.

Eventually, your workstation may have an arm for a sit/stand keyboard tray and for the monitor. But rather than wait for the office of the future, find opportunities now to take a break from the computer. Even if you already have a sit/stand workstation, you should still take breaks to avoid a static posture. Whether standing or sitting at the computer, give your eyes and upper body a break. When standing, support one foot on a six-inch platform; if you stand for 90 percent of your work, stand on an anti-fatigue mat.

Employees are sometimes reluctant to stand at the computer or try other options because they do not want to look strange. (When stretching at my desk one day, I overheard someone say, "What is she doing?") Find a solution that works for you. Go to WebMD at <http://www.webmd.com/fitness-exercise/video/office-exercises-in-5-minutes> for a good video clip about office exercises that can be done in 5 minutes. (For safety, you must use a stationary chair as shown in the clip.) Exercise phone apps such as those shown at right are another source for finding the right moves for you.

Office Exercise Phone Apps

iPhone

Breakpal
Office-fit *(free)*
Everywhere Exercise
iStretch
Lastics Office Stretch
iPump Office Stretch
Office Fitness
Workout Trainer *(free)*
Fitness Exercises in the Office *(free)*
Office Yoga
Stretch Pro



Android

Office Exercise Pro
Eye Trainer *(free)*
ergo@work *(free)*
Body Cards *(free)*
Stretch Exercises *(free)*
Office Exercise & Stretch
Office Workout: Exercises
Workout Trainer *(free)*
Daily Cardio Workout *(free)*
Office Yoga – Care Your Health *(free)*
Office Time Out



For more information about sit-to-stand workstations and other ergonomic tools, visit the OBO/OPS/SHM website at <http://obo.m.state.sbu/ops/shem/Pages/Ergonomics2.aspx>. ■

Many Threads

Retiree's Film Documents Woman's Fabric Artistry

By Leonard A. Hill

Surayia Rahman never expected that her art would help hundreds of destitute young women in Bangladesh become economically self-sufficient. Nor did the women who worked with Rahman expect to eventually earn enough from art to be able to send their children to college and buy land. Similarly, my wife, Cathy Stevulak, and I never expected to become documentary filmmakers, following my 2008 retirement after 27 years in the Foreign Service.

But today we are deeply involved in producing a film about a Rahman, a Muslim woman in one of the world's poorest countries, who liberates herself and hundreds of others by creating timeless art.

Rahman's distinctive fabric art mainly consists of wall hangings that are inspired by the ancient Bengali quilting and embroidery tradition called *nakshi kantha*. The stitches in these works tell stories of Moghul times, the last era of the British Raj and daily life in rural Bangladesh. A large piece can take more than a year to create.

Now purchased by private collectors and donated to museums, Rahman's artworks have even been presented by the government of Bangladesh as state gifts, including to Queen Elizabeth. A piece commissioned for the 1989 opening of the new U.S. Embassy in Dhaka hangs in the building's lobby.

Yet the accomplishments of Rahman and the artisans who worked with her are largely unknown, so an art college professor suggested to Cathy that we document the stories underlying Rahman's art we agreed, and the result is a \$270,000 broadcast-quality film that's expected to conclude production this year. The film has gone from simply documenting the artwork to telling a broader and more universal story of one individual making a crucial difference to many.

Rahman's story is one of changing lives through sharing skills and artisan enterprise, set against a backdrop of the partition of India, the war that brought Bangladesh independence and a household craft practiced for generations by rural women that was nearly lost in the tumult.

Rahman, center, instructs several of the women who worked with her in Bangladesh to create elaborate embroidered art.

Photos by Anil Advani and Kantha Productions LLC





Above: The author, left, and, his wife, Cathy Stevulak, right, show Rahman some of their film's footage during a visit to Dhaka. **Right:** One of Rahman's works depicts the 1989 opening of the U.S. Embassy in Dhaka and now hangs in the embassy lobby.

A modest, largely self-taught woman who never sought fame, Rahman has always had an intense desire to be an artist. Born under British rule in Calcutta, she was married at a young age and transplanted to then-East Pakistan at a time when women hardly ever worked outside the home. She nonetheless supported herself and her family through her art, becoming possibly the first Bangladeshi woman artist to have her work exhibited abroad. She gave a thriving community of women artisans the ability to support their families as well.

My wife, Cathy, has been involved in the project from the very beginning, she as director and I as producer. While posted in Dhaka, we had both become admirers of Rahman's elaborate wall hangings and eventually met her and were inspired by her quiet determination and commitment to finding and creating beauty. I began the film about a year after I retired from my last posting, as deputy chief of mission at Mission Belize. The first challenge my wife and I faced in making the film was to find experienced filmmakers who could guide us. When we lived in Dhaka we had met Tareque and Catherine Masud, award winners at Cannes for their film "Matir Moina" ("The Clay Bird"), Bangladesh's first-ever submission to the Academy Awards. Their production company had equipment and trained personnel that we could contract, and Catherine offered to be a consulting producer. She and Tareque introduced us to Mishuk Munier, a wonderful cinematographer with decades of experience with the BBC and other broadcasters. Through friends, we met Anil Advani, a photographer in Dhaka; Frederick Marx, who was nominated for an Oscar for the documentary "Hoop Dreams"; and film editor Rita Meher, co-founder of the South Asia cinema organization *Tasveer*. Many others have also helped us with filming and advice.

When we started, we knew the location of just three of Rahman's works. Working with her and some of the many Americans and Canadians who volunteered to help her over the years, we tracked down owners of her art in Bangladesh, Italy, France, Switzerland, New Zealand, Japan, Canada and the United States. We found that museums in Canada, Japan and Australia have her work in their collections.

A key challenge of independent filmmaking is fundraising. Luckily, the International Documentary Association in Los Angeles reviewed and accepted our application for "fiscal sponsorship," and collects tax-deductible donations on our behalf. We have completed most of the film with the support of individuals and a foundation grant, but continue to reach out to corporations, foundations and individuals who believe in the ripple effect of opportunity for women and the importance of creativity in life.

An online presence is vital to build awareness and a potential audience for a film. There are more than 20 million quilters and embroiderers in the United States, so we wanted to let them and other



potential audiences know about our movie, "Threads: The Art and Life of Surayia Rahman". It now has a website and blog, and pages on Facebook, Google+, Tumblr and Pinterest, each with a somewhat different following.

Having a large potential audience will help us with distribution, which will begin once the film is complete. We are working hard so that Rahman, who recently turned 80, will be able to see the finished documentary. We hope others who see it will be inspired by her determination and commitment to art and humanity. So far, our local PBS affiliate has expressed interest, as have TV stations in Bangladesh. Museums and educational institutions are also interested, and we will soon begin applying to screen the work at film festivals.

At least three American ambassadors to Bangladesh have prominently displayed Rahman's artwork in their homes, which may explain why many staff and spouses from the Department of State, USAID and Public Health Service know of Rahman and her art. They've all been extremely helpful when contacted with requests for information or photos, as have Canadian Foreign Service members who served in Dhaka. We welcome anyone who knows Rahman or has her art to contact us.

As our movie heads toward theaters and broadcast outlets, we hope it will broaden views about heritage and humanity, encourage artisan enterprise and support for living artists, and present low-income artisans with the hope of an alternative to hardship. As Rahman often says, "Everything is possible."

A four-minute trailer for the film is at kanthathreads.com. Other information on the film is on the International Documentary Association website. Rahman's work can be seen online at textilemuseum.ca, and at powerhousemuseum.com. An article about her in *Hand/Eye Magazine* is available at handeyemagazine.com. ■



Civil Rights Photos Exhibited at Embassy Moscow

A photographic exhibit on civil rights that opened in the U.S. Embassy's Hall of Ambassadors in Moscow in February has drawn the attention of Russian visitors.

"I literally had to pull them away after several minutes," said Political Officer Kevin Covert. "It made me proud to be an American to see that we are not afraid to tell these stories and to encourage public reaction."

The "In the Same Boat Now" show opened in time for February's Black History Month and for International Women's Day in March. It features 18 images, including those of Rosa Parks during the Montgomery bus boycott, farm labor organizer Cesar Chavez, the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II and the American Indian Movement's occupation of Alcatraz Island. Also shown are photos of female leaders such as Senator Barbara Jordan and early 20th century suffragettes, gay activist Harvey Milk and Arab Americans in the post-9/11 United States. The exhibit will be permanently installed at the embassy.



Visitors examine the embassy's photo exhibit.
Photo by Stefan Mizha



Salsa Contest Spices Up Post Life

In February, the U.S. Consulate General in Nogales, Mexico, put on its first competition to test the salsa-making abilities of the staff. A total of 13 salsas, from mild to tongue-burning spicy, were sampled and judged by employees. The winner won by one vote.

"The salsas were excellent, and it was gratifying to see the pride of our staff in displaying their local cuisine," said Principal Officer Chad Cummins. No stranger to spicy food, he said a few of them sent him "in search of a fire extinguisher."

A trio of fresh salsas ... fire extinguisher not included.
Photo by Julie Hunt Connel

"The American employees were really amazed at the variety of salsas available, and the local employees were able to showcase an important part of their cuisine," said Katelyn Rettenmayer, Community Liaison Office coordinator.

Ambassador Receives Award

U.S. Ambassador to Switzerland and Liechtenstein Donald S. Beyer Jr. received the Thomas Jefferson Award at a Department ceremony in March. The award by American Citizens Abroad (ACA) is presented to a Department officer who has rendered outstanding service to Americans overseas, said ACA, a citizen's advocacy group representing six million overseas Americans.

Ambassador Beyer was recognized for leadership and participation in a multiyear series of town hall meetings with American citizens that ACA said helped highlight issues and open dialogue between American citizens abroad and the U.S. government.

"Ambassador Beyer has done an outstanding job in Switzerland during a difficult time for U.S. citizens living here," said Jackie Bugnion of ACA. "He was open to discussion and listened to us closely."

Ambassador Beyer receives the Thomas Jefferson Award from American Citizens Abroad Director Jacqueline Abrams.
Photo by James Pan





Health Fair in Chennai Goes International

Employees of the British, German and Australian consulates in Chennai, India, joined some 250 U.S. and local staffers, their families and domestic staff at the U.S. Consulate General's fourth annual health fair in February. The event, organized by Medical Officer Jack Sibal and nurse Olivia Rajan, offered health screenings and dental checkups, and vendors served fruit drinks and healthful pastries. There were also judo and yoga demonstrations and a tug-of-war among American officers and local staff.

U.S. Consul General Jennifer McIntyre said she was pleased the consulate could offer such a valuable service to its staff and other missions. "Promoting good health globally also means taking care of those around us," she said.

A staffer of the Australian Consulate said its employees appreciated the invitation. "It is a great initiative," said Rajee Divakar, the consulate's human resources manager.

From left, Budget and Finance Assistant Gerald Pinto, Visa Clerk Lakshmi Mondru, nurse Olivia Rajan and Visa Clerk Viji Sathyabalan participate in a tug-of-war during Consulate General Chennai's Health Fair.

Photo courtesy Consulate General Chennai

College Night Held at Ciudad Juárez

In March, the U.S. Consulate General in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, hosted a college night with the University of Texas El Paso (UTEP). Nearly 500 prospective students and family members cruised past information tables and asked questions of UTEP administrative staff and consular officers. The event reinitiated an educational relationship put on hold five years ago when Ciudad Juárez's security situation made travel to northern Mexico difficult.

Speakers included UTEP President Dr. Diana Natalicio, Consul General of Mexico in El Paso Jacob Prado, U.S. Consul General in Ciudad Juárez Ian Brownlee and Foreign Service officer Javier Araujo, a Ciudad Juárez native who is on a four-month practicum with an El Paso/Juárez regional economic development organization. Brownlee said studying abroad is not just rewarding for the individual, but also "one of the most important contributions solidifying the already outstanding relations between our two countries."

Araujo reminisced about sitting in the visa waiting room of the old Juárez consulate seeking his student visa, and told the Mexican students that the world was theirs, and that "it all starts with a sound education."



Starting at fourth from left, U.S. Consul General Ian Brownlee, UTEP President Diana Natalicio and Mexican Consul General Jacob Prado form the miners' hand symbol (a pickaxe) alongside UTEP and U.S. Consulate officials at the consulate's college night.

Photo by Patricia Muñoz

Retirements

Foreign Service

Awantang, Mary E.
Davis, Kay Mathews
Guimond, Alan D.
Haftel, Michael K.
Meredith, Thomas J.
Montauk, Lance E.

Newton, Anthony C.
Solinsky, Michelle A.
Vermette, Felix O.
Verveer, Philip L.
Wilkinson, Penelope A.

Civil Service

Alvarez, Luisa M.
Balderston, Kris M.
Baltimore, Margaret R.
Bartlett, Katherine A.
Cassil, Cynthia A.
Cosson, Paula Faye
Dewan, Linda Lou

Grigsby, William H.
Hicks, Thomas C.
Jette, Maureen E.
Koch, Ronald J.
Lawrence, James F.
Massabki, Farid
McHale, Dennis M.

Pino, Carmine J.
Tartasky, Donald J.
Verveer, Melanne S.
West, M. Denise
Whitman, Stella L.



Share the World Through Your Eyes

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LYING IN STATE

DIPLMOMATCH!

PERSONAL ADS



POLITICAL OFFICER SEEKS ROBUST AND FORWARD-LEANING, FULSOME RELATIONSHIP WITH SUBSTANTIVE OFFICER. LOVES LONG WALKS AND DRAFTING WRY, INSIGHTFUL TALKING POINTS. OPEN-MINDED, BUT NO INTERFUNCTIONALITY PLEASE.

ME: BEING FORCIBLY REMOVED FROM ICKYSTAN NATIONAL DAY RECEPTION AFTER ALTERCATION WITH RITZOVIAN DEFENSE ATTACHE WHO CLAIMED KNOWLEDGE OF SPIDER MONKEYS SUPERIOR TO MY OWN. YOU: RECOILING IN HORROR AS I UPEND PUNCH BOWL OF FERMENTED HAMSTER MILK, ICKYSTAN'S SURPRISINGLY REFRESHING NATIONAL BEVERAGE, ON YOUR GREEN GINGHAM DRESS. BETWEEN FLASHES OF SHOCK AND RAGE, THOUGHT I SAW A TWINKLE IN YOUR EYE - START OF SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL?

NEUROTIC ECONOMIC OFFICER, SKILL CODE CONVERSION CURIOUS, SEEKING BILAT OR BRIEF PULL-ASIDE. MUST LOVE TAPIRS AND BE ENTITLED TO A FULL SHIPMENT OF HOUSEHOLD PRIORITIES NEED RESPONSE. ONLY THOSE SEEKING LINKAGE OF STRATEGIC



SWF HRO (INT.) ISO SMOKE ENL P RSO-LWOP OK, NO MANPADS! HOUSE PLANT - MUST BE XERISCAPE CURIOUS WELL-TRAVELED LINE OFFICER! NON-HARDSHIP IMMUNE SYSTEM THE WEAK! CLEARANCE TAPEWORM PROVEN



Obituaries



Louis J. Correr, 91, a retired Foreign Service regional communications officer, died March 15 in Arlington, Va. He served in the Army Signal Corps before joining the Department. His postings included Bonn, London, Beirut, Paris and Manila. He also worked with the Multinational Force and Observers in Rome and as a consultant to the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City. After retiring in 1980, he volunteered at Alexandria Hospital and a homeless shelter, and counseled abusive husbands and disabled boys. He was an avid artist and amateur singer.



Lucian Heichler, 87, a retired Foreign Service officer, died Feb. 13 of respiratory failure in Stamford, Conn. He served in the Army during World War II, joined the Foreign Service as a reserve officer in 1954 and gained full FSO status in 1963 during his first overseas posting, to Berlin. Other postings included Yaoundé, Kinshasa, Bern, Brussels (NATO) and Ankara. After retiring in 1986, he volunteered as a translator for the Smithsonian Institution.



Leonard Jameson, 69, a retired USAID Foreign Service officer, died Jan. 25 of pulmonary fibrosis. He lived in Byrdstown, Tenn. His overseas postings included Manila and Cairo. After retiring to Tennessee in 1998, he enjoyed relaxing on Dale Hollow Lake, golfing, fishing, traveling and spending time with family and friends.



Matthew P. Jennings, 59, a facilities manager with the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, died March 17 of lung cancer while on R&R from Iraq. Accompanied by his Foreign Service wife, Monika, he was posted to Sierra Leone, Nepal, Brazil, Ghana, Yemen and Uruguay. He also performed many temporary-duty assignments around the world. Known for his warmth, wit and intellect, he mentored colleagues and was devoted to his family.



John Francis King, 84, a retired Foreign Service employee, died Feb. 24 at his home in Churchville, Va. He entered the Foreign Service in 1963 and was posted to Venezuela, the Dominican Republic and Argentina. After retiring in 1984, he maintained an active interest in global political affairs.



Robert Allen "Pete" Lacock, 77, a retired Foreign Service officer, died April 17, 2012, from myelodysplastic syndrome in Madison, Wis. He served in the Army and worked for the U.S. Information Service in Geneva. Later Foreign Service postings included Niger, Central African Republic, Germany, Romania and Norway. After retiring to Madison in 1999, he enjoyed reading, basketball, watching hockey and spending summers in Florida.



Thomas B. O'Connell, 84, a retired Foreign Service officer, died Feb. 14 near his home in Black Mountain, N.C. He was posted to Iran, Morocco, Mexico City, Brussels, Bucharest and Sofia. After retiring to Black Mountain in 1991, he taught chess in schools, libraries and prisons, and entomology and evolution at the University of North Carolina-Asheville. He was active in his church and as a community volunteer.



Robert S. "Bob" Queener, 74, a retired Foreign Service officer, died March 12 in San Mateo, Calif. He served in the Army and with the Ford Foundation before joining USAID. His postings included Brazil, Thailand and Jamaica. After retiring in 1994, he worked as a consultant to the emerging economies of Eastern Europe. He loved family, baseball and traveling in search of the perfect beach and sunset.



James Thomas Schollaert, 73, a retired Foreign Service officer, died Feb. 17 of heart failure at his home in Arlington, Va. He joined the Department in 1966 and was posted to Austria, Czechoslovakia, the USSR, the Netherlands, Kazakhstan and Bosnia. After retiring in 2003, he formed a lobbying consultancy focused on domestic manufacturing. He was a founder of the Arlington Tigers wrestling team.



Gwenith B. (McCordic) Sietsema, 100, a retired Civil Service employee, died Jan. 16 at her home in Ft. Morgan, Colo., where she lived for more than 40 years. After serving in the Department for 21 years, she retired as a budget analyst in 1968. She then pursued her interest in music and painting, and traveled extensively.



Raymond L. Telles, 97, former U.S. Ambassador to Costa Rica, died March 8 in Sherman Oaks, Calif. He served in the Army and Air Force during World War II and the Korean Conflict, before being elected the first Hispanic mayor of El Paso, Texas, in 1957. After his ambassadorship to Costa Rica in the 1960s, he served on the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in the 1970s. He was an advisor and friend to several presidents.



Thomas A. Trainer, 77, a retired Foreign Service communicator, died Feb. 14 of heart disease at his home in Casa Grande, Ariz. He served in the Air Force before joining the Department. His overseas postings included Bonn, Dhaka, London, Frankfurt, Tunis, The Hague, Islamabad, New Delhi, Hamburg and Shenyang. After retiring in 1992, he enjoyed classical music, chess, astronomy, World War II history and writing fan fiction.



Ellen K. Watkins, 80, widow of retired Foreign Service officer Dewey R. Watkins Jr., died March 13 at her home in Washington, D.C. After retiring from the Library of Congress, she enjoyed traveling.



Virginia A. Weyres, 87, a retired Foreign Service officer, died Nov. 19 in Chapel Hill, N.C. Her postings included Jordan, Vietnam, Norway and Argentina. After retiring to Washington, D.C., she was actively involved in various political and charitable causes.



Ruth Ann Whiteford, 68, a retired Foreign Service secretary, died Jan. 25 at her home in Alabaster, Ala. Her postings included Vienna, Algiers, Gaborone, Caracas, Harare and Athens. She enjoyed church, family, friends, reading, gardening and travel.

Questions concerning employee deaths should be directed to the Office of Casualty Assistance at (202) 736-4302. Inquiries concerning deaths of retired employees should be directed to the Office of Retirement at (202) 261-8960. For specific questions on submitting an obituary, please contact Bill Palmer at palmerwr2@state.gov or (202) 203-7114. ■

End State



Indonesia



Predawn light casts an ethereal blue glow on the landscape and bell cages surrounding several of the more than 500 Buddha statues at Borobudur, a 9th-century Mahayana Buddhist Temple in Magelang, Central Java, Indonesia. The monument consists of six square platforms topped by three circular platforms and is decorated with 2,672 relief panels.

Photo by Trey Ratcliff

PG. 4



London



A couple takes shelter from the rain under separate umbrellas as they gaze towards Canary Wharf from a landing in Greenwich Park. A former hunting ground, the park is now one of the largest green spaces in southeast London, covering 180 acres.

Photo by Craig Allen

PG. 7





South Africa

A Malachite Kingfisher hunts from its perch in Kruger National Park, one of the largest game reserves in Africa. The park covers an area of 19,633 sq km (7,580 sq mi) in the provinces of Limpopo and Mpumalanga in northeastern South Africa.

Photo by Shayne Gelo

PG. 18



Bosnia & Herzegovina

A pedestrian wades through a sea of pigeons in Baščaršija, Sarajevo's old bazaar and the historical and cultural center of the city. Baščaršija was built in the 15th century during the beginning of the Ottoman era.

Photo by Ivana Vasilj

PG. 26





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